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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

AF/E FOR MARIA BEYZEROV
AF/RSA FOR JUN BANDO AND MIKE BITTRICK
S/P FOR PETER HARELL
L FOR BUCHHOLS AND BINIAZ
ANTAN FOR DAO
NAIROBI FOR KUSLO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PHSA](#) [EWWT](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SO](#) [SE](#)
SUBJECT: HOW SEYCHELLES CAPTURED 23 SUSPECTED PIRATES

REF: A. BLASER-DEPT SEYCHELLES PIRACY EMAILS MAY 5-6
[1](#)B. PORT LOUIS 137

[1](#)1. (U) On May 7, the Seychelles government-controlled daily "Seychelles Nation" (or the "Nation") reported that since April 28, the Seychelles Police Force has captured 23 Somali pirates in its Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ), in three separate operations carried out with the help of European and Indian forces. In a press conference held on May 6, Police Commissioner Ernest Quatre said that the three groups of Somali pirates are being held in police custody and will remain detained until formal charges are brought against them. The investigation is progressing at a slow pace, mainly due to the language barrier, said Quatre. The detainees received medical care and a visit from the Red Cross upon their arrival in Victoria.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In the same article, the "Nation" reported that the first nine pirates were captured on April 28 on the "northern edge of Seychelles' 1.3 million square kilometer EEZ" that borders Somali waters. This operation was carried out with the help of European and Indian naval forces and Seychellois Coast Guard. The Numancia, a Spanish frigate, spotted the boat and, with the help of French, Indian and Seychellois, followed and captured the boat in the Seychelles territorial waters. The nine pirates were handed over to the Seychellois police and brought to Victoria aboard the Andromache, which has a crew of 25. On May 6, a Coast Guard officer told Emboffs the capture took place on the north-western (NW) edge of the Seychelles EEZ.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Andromache was the only operational Seychellois Coast Guard vessel until the recent return of the Coast Guard ship Topaz. According to the Indian High Commissioner in Seychelles who spoke to CDA on May 6, the Topaz, which was originally given to GOS by the government of India, recently received 1.4 million USD worth of repairs courtesy of India and was returned to Seychelles only last week. The repairs were necessary because of poor maintenance conducted by the GOS caretakers, who lack the technical ability and supplies to keep the handful of Coast Guard vessels in workable condition.

[1](#)4. (U) According to a May 5 report in the "Nation," on May 2, the French naval ship Nivose alerted the Andromache to the presence of a six-meter boat carrying three Somali pirates in the same NW EEZ area. The Seychellois forces captured the boat and the three persons identified themselves as Somalis. They were unarmed and offered no resistance. The Nivose is

part of the European Union naval operation "Atalanta."

¶5. (U) The same "Nation" report stated that on May 4 a joint operation of the Seychelles People's Defense Force (SPDF) and the Seychelles Police Force led to the capture of three small skiffs carrying a total of 11 Somali men. The arrests occurred near Marianne Island, approximately 33 miles North-North East of Victoria and about five miles from the tourist island of La Digue. (Note: Marianne Island is a frequent boating daytrip destination for foreign tourists who wish to snorkel and enjoy beach picnics. End Note.)

¶6. (U) Captain Jean Attala of the Seychelles Coast Guard, who is also the Incident Operations Officer, was quoted as saying "It is evident that the recent anti-piracy operations in the western Indian Ocean have scattered the small pirate boats from their mother ships, and some have drifted into Seychelles' waters." Seychellois authorities found no weapons, only cartridges, fishing rods, webbing, and other articles suspected to be from previously pirated ships.

¶7. (SBU) On May 6, Seychelles Coast Guard Commanding Officer Col Donald Gertrude told the CDA and PolChief that the suspected pirates were non-aggressive, and young, with one being just 15. "Someone must have briefed them on what to do when intercepted, because they dumped their guns and surrendered once we approached," said Gertrude. Other Seychelles CG officials surmised to Emboffs that from their malnourished looks and what they had aboard the skiffs, the mother boat must supply the pirates with all needed equipment and tell them not to return without a captured vessel. Two

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senior government officials recounted a similar story about the initial sighting of these suspected pirates: that two locals taking tourists to Marianne Island were approached by the group, who asked the locals "which way is it to Somalia?" Concerned, the locals called La Digue police and some hours later the group was arrested by Seychellois authorities. (Note: Photos of the captured QbrotherQ boat and two "baby" skiffs, which are being held at the Seychelles Coast Guard pier in Mahe, Seychelles, can be found at the following intranet link:
. End Note.)

COMMENT

¶8. (SBU) Some contacts believe the pirates are collaboratively operating in four groups, with each taking one of four regions of Seychelles waters and that the recent captures have, at a minimum, disrupted two of the four cells currently operating in the area. The spate of captures is both reassuring for Seychelles, since significant numbers have been captured, and disturbing evidence of the widening scope of the problem.

BLASER